

2.0 STUDY ISSUES AND GOALS

2.1 Project Issues

Based on the technical analyses, as well as extensive public involvement, the Project Team identified a number of important issues for consideration in examining US 51 in Clinton. A summary of the issues is given below.

Vehicular Safety and Highway Design – There are locations on US 51 in the study area with narrow shoulders, steep grades, sharp curves, inadequate turning radii, no turn lanes, angled intersections, and poor lines of sight. Some of the locations with safety concerns include US 51 near Cresap Street, US 51 at KY 58 (W. Clay Street), US 51 at KY 58 (Mayfield Road), US 51 in the vicinity of KY 780 (North and South) and US 51 near Martin Road.

Pedestrian Safety – There are sidewalk and crosswalk deficiencies at locations along US 51, including on Beeler Hill and near Cresap Street. School children cross US 51 at Cresap Street. The high population of senior citizens in the study area (approximately 22 percent) and low auto ownership raises additional pedestrian safety concerns.

Truck Traffic – Truck traffic is an important part of the local and regional economy, however the large percentage of truck traffic also presents issues for the local transportation system and community such as geometric issues (turning radii and narrow lanes) and truck noise. Truck percentages as high as 21 percent have been observed on US 51 north of Clinton. In town however, the truck percentages are closer to 7 percent. One potential reason for the high truck volumes is that the next major river crossing to the south is near Dyersburg, Tennessee (I-155). Traffic from Union City in northwest Tennessee, a major generator of truck traffic, likely does not backtrack to Dyersburg but heads north on US 51 to cross at Cairo, Illinois. Truck turning issues at US 51 / KY 58 (W. Clay Street) is a significant problem. Farm equipment traffic, both tractors and shipments of equipment, is a related issue.

Traffic Flows – Overall, the highway system currently operates well with regard to traffic flow, with minimal delay and congestion. However, in the future the level of service for some of the intersections will drop below LOS C because of poor operating conditions generally associated with the left turn movements to and from the minor streets onto US 51. School traffic and traffic from local establishments is an important issue for local traffic planning. The schools cause traffic peaking around 7:30 – 8:00 a.m. in the morning and around 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon.

Economic Development and Regional Access – The relationship between US 51 and local economic development is a critical issue. Promotion of economic development is very important to both Clinton and Hickman County. The recent closure of a clothing manufacturing plant caused the loss of over 130 local jobs (10 percent of the county job base). Local economic decline has also caused a loss of local tax base. Most recent

commercial development in the area has been on US 51 south of Clinton. Preservation of the current businesses (downtown and on US 51 south) is one significant concern, while another is the attraction and/or development of new businesses in the area. A third issue relates to connections from the county to other regional roadways such as the Purchase Parkway.

Project Implementation and Funding – Obtaining the necessary funding to make roadway improvements in the study area in a reasonable time frame is an important issue for the community.

Historic Preservation, Property Impacts, and Community Character – Preservation of the County Courthouse and other historic buildings (churches and residences) along US 51 is important. First Christian Church, a 100-year old church, was given as an example. With regard to highway widening, the potential for property impacts to homes and businesses fronting US 51 (without large setbacks) is a concern. There is also a desire among local residents to maintain and improve their rural community character and quality of life.

Parking, Drainage, and Utilities – Parking in the vicinity of the courthouse is an important issue to some local employees and businesses. Drainage problems are present at various places along US 51 and flooding occurs during times of heavy rain (such as near the Bayou De Chien). The presence of utility poles close to the roadway edge in sections with limited shoulders and/or narrow lanes (such as on the hill north of town) are a potential traffic safety hazard. The presence of underground and aboveground utilities (water, sewer, electric, telephone, gas, etc.) all in the existing right-of-way and close to the current curb face also presents a major issue. Relocation of these utilities could result in substantial cost that would likely be passed on to local customers.

Highway Beautification – In addition to sidewalk improvements, improving the town visually through streetscape enhancements is an important issue.

Minority, Low-Income, and Senior Populations – There are substantial minority, low-income, and elderly populations in the study area. These residents should be involved in the study process to the greatest extent practicable.

Environmental Issues – The study area may contain a number of state or federal threatened or endangered species and does contain many wetlands. Avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation will be pursued with respect to these sensitive environmental features.

2.2 Project Goals

The goals for projects to be evaluated in the US 51 study directly relate to the key issues discussed above. These goals were developed with extensive input from the local community. Local leaders and citizens participated through the Project Work

Group in proposing specific goals and even assisting with drafting the language for the goals. The general public also had opportunities to propose and comment on the goals. The key project goals include:

1. Enhance vehicle and pedestrian safety on US 51 in the study area;
2. Mitigate the negative impacts of heavy truck traffic on US 51, while maintaining an efficient through route for trucks and other vehicles;
3. Maintain appropriate traffic controls and traffic flow conditions;
4. Preserve downtown business, while enhancing overall economic development opportunities;
5. Improve highway geometry and drainage;
6. Avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate property takings on US 51 as well as other community and environmental impacts (This was put forward specifically by many local citizens and has been included even though it is understood to be part of the normal KYTC planning and design process); and
7. Facilitate improved regional connections to the Purchase Parkway and other existing regional highways as well as to the possible future I-66 corridor (should it be implemented).

The issues discussed above were put forward by the Project Team, Project Work Group, or the general public. However, they were also supported by the technical analysis that is presented in the following chapters. Similarly, the goals were put forward by various individuals, but again they were substantiated by documented issues and/or by significant public concerns.

Overall, the project goals and issues were critical to the success of the study. The issues were referenced to make sure that all key aspects were given proper attention. They were also used to develop the project alternatives. The goals were used to focus the study and to bring it to completion. They were also used to evaluate the alternatives and to make sure the final recommendations achieved the goals set for the project.